2: Teichman G-5 (1919) 1921 AF13 Northwest China AF13

the landscape is dreary in the extreme, the population scanty and miserably poor, supplies non-existent, and the water, where it is found, brackish. The third day's march is through similar country until, 50 li from Hsikou, the trail debouches from these barren hills on to a small irrigated plain alongside the Yellow River, which here issues from a cleft in the mountains; at the further end of the plain lies the long straggling village of Powan. To the north and south are bare desolate mountains.

At Powan we abandoned our train of Kansu pack-mules. These particular mules, each carrying between two and three hundred pounds, had accompanied us for three to four months, during which period they had covered over 2000 miles without a hitch, with never a sore back, and never one sick or lame. The Kansu mule is perhaps the finest in the world; his only drawback is that he requires a lot of grain and does not do well in the grass country. The muleteers, Kansu men, walked the entire distance and never gave us any trouble whatsoever; both they and their animals seemed capable of going on for ever as long as they both got plenty to eat. The Kansu pack-mules are all entires, and their strength and endurance are simply astounding; the mares are worked in carts.

We found our rafts waiting for us, having accomplished safely in a few hours the journey which had taken us three days. Two of them were fitted out to take our ten ponies, and two others had tents pitched for our accommodation; another carried the soldiers of our escort, and two more were laden with odds and ends of merchandize belonging apparently to the owner of the lumber. By midday the whole flotilla of seven were swirling down the river under the autumn sun, and as we reclined in front of our tents and watched the sandstone cliffs shoot by after so many months of mountain and desert we felt thoroughly at peace with things generally. The river flowed between low hills of red sandstone with loess superimposed, grass covered on the right bank and desert on the left. In places small plains, like that in which Powan lies, opened out on either side; they were always irrigated by huge water wheels, of exactly the same type as those so common in Szechuan, and their green trees and fertile fields formed a striking contrast to the background of desert hills.

3:Cable & French M-5 (1926) 1927
AF13 Northwest China AF13

water was carrying considerable ice-floes, but one day, at a narrow part of the bed some miles further down, they were arrested, and in a few hours the whole river was piled up, mass on mass, with ice. The impact was so powerful that blocks were flung wildly about in all directions, and with one mighty solidifying spasm the iron grip closed upon the waters, and the Yellow River was ice-bound for months.

CHAPTER IV

LANCHOW TO LIANGCHOW

THE journey from Lanchow to Liangchow can, under favourable conditions, be accomplished in one week. Half-way between lies the town of Pingfan, at the angle where the cross-roads leading westwards to Sining and Kokonor meet the main North-West road.

A few miles outside Lanchow we traversed the dry bed of an ancient inland-sea, circular in form. The high-water mark showed clearly far overhead near the top of the surrounding cliffs, where the stone was worn into the shape of pillars. The bed was strewn with finest sand, and all the water procurable was very salt. It was here that we met the first herd of yak, which was being driven to Lanchow for slaughter, as a large amount of the beef sold in these cities of the North-West is yak meat.

The fourth day brought us to the Pingfan valley, down which a watercourse rushed between banks of ice, supplying the power to work a number of flour mills which were grinding, even though their structure was hung with enormous icicles. Here, for the first time, we passed a prayer-wheel, erected below a basin